

NORTHERN



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### **Restricting Southeast Alaskan Fisheries Is Not The Answer Sitka, Alaska- March 7, 2000**

Southeast Alaska commercial salmon fishermen embarked on the journey to conserve dwindling Chinook salmon stocks over twenty (20) years ago. At that time we were being told that, for our efforts, we would see the stocks restored to historic levels and that Alaska's share of the available harvest would be restored to historic levels. This has not happened. The stock rebuilding plan has not been successful because not all of the barriers to passing adult spawners, and resulting smolt were adequately addressed. The people of the Pacific Northwest must now come face to face with the fact that they must take responsibility for the habitat degradation that has taken place, and that they have enjoyed the "good life" that comes with inexpensive hydro power at the expense of the salmon. Fishing in Alaska can no longer be blamed for the development "sins" of the Pacific Northwest.

In order to potentially reduce Chinook salmon harvest levels and to conserve a few more spawners, Alaska's chinook salmon quota has been reduced to a level where chinook troll openings are 5-10 days long, and they are few and far between.

Alaska salmon fishermen have been investing their earnings in salmon enhancement programs in Southeast Alaska for twenty years. Substantial sums of money have been spent building state-of-the-art hatcheries, in an attempt to mitigate the loss of salmon during this so-called "rebuilding period". The production end of that plan has been working quite well, however, we have found that the fishermen have little time and area open to them to successfully access the fish they are paying to produce. Placing further restrictions on Alaska fisheries will only make it even more difficult for Alaska fishermen to try to get a decent return on their investment. Further restrictions, that by the way won't solve the Snake River problems, will lead to reducing the size of chinook enhancement programs or quite possibly eliminating them. Why pay to produce these fish if they cannot be caught and used?

Alaska cannot solve the fish problems of the Pacific Northwest. We, in Alaska, have stepped up to the plate. We continue to protect our own habitat, and we have done our part to try to help you save your salmon. It is now past time to face up to the fact that dams and habitat degradation are responsible for 95+ percent of the problems salmon in the Pacific Northwest face.

Pete Esquiro  
General Manager